

BOOK REVIEW

RICKY J. LINEX. 2014. **Range Plants of North Central Texas—A Land User's Guide to Their Identification, Value and Management.** (ISBN-13: 978-1-4951-2165-4, pbk., spiral-bound). USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, 532 Santa Fe Drive, Weatherford, Texas 76086, U.S.A. (**Orders:** shop.brit.org, 1-817-332-4441). \$20.00, 345 pp., color photos, illus. glossary, glossary, bib., index, 9.5" × 11.25".

Wildlife Biologist Ricky Linex has created a fine resource for botanists, farmers, land managers, wildlife managers, plant enthusiasts, students, and anybody interested in the flora of Texas and the southern plains states. Though the title specifies its regional focus as North Central Texas, the book should also prove useful to readers in Oklahoma and even parts of New Mexico.

The concept for the book came from a previous USDA-NRCS publication, *Common Rangeland Plants of the Texas Panhandle* by Clint Rollins. Linex took the idea and repeated it for an area that includes not only the Rolling Plains vegetational area, but also the Cross Timbers, Blackland Prairie, and Post Oak Savannah areas.

The book is laid out in sections, with forbs, grasses, and woody plants being separated out and arranged taxonomically by first family then genus. Though some of the family names are old (Asclepiadaceae and Chenopodiaceae instead of Apocynaceae and Amaranthaceae), the author does include synonyms for a good portion of the 324 taxa, ostensibly for “those of us who first learned the scientific names more than a few years ago”.

Each taxon page is headed in large print by the most-used common name, with alternative common names listed out to the side. A small area in the upper left or right corner of each page includes the following items: scientific name, family name, common name for family, origin, longevity, season of growth, bloom period, and distribution relative to vegetational areas. In addition, each page includes three narrative sections on identification, value, and management (hence the book's subtitle), and it is these last two that make this book different from other regional guides. The value section on *Justicia americana* (water-willow), for example, states “Livestock and deer graze upon water-willow, and the plants will be utilized extensively when other forage becomes scarce during hot, dry summers ...” The management section for the same species reads, “Under heavy use by livestock and native or exotic animals, water-willow will be browsed close to the ground. Proper stocking rates and rotational grazing will ensure this forb will remain rooted in wet areas where it helps provide stability to stream banks.”

Each page boasts from 3 to 6 color photographs (typically 4 or 5), many of which were taken by the author himself. A good number of pages contain a standardized seed photo—several seeds against an orange background with a 1/16 inch ruler for scale. This standardization makes these photos easy to pick out among the photo-heavy pages, and I am thankful that the author made this decision.

Lots of extras are sprinkled into the book. Between the forb and grass section one can find the “Checklist and Value of Cattle Forage Plants of North Central Texas” as well as a nice little essay on grass by John James Ingalls (1833–1900). Between the grass and woody sections are “Preference Categories of Deer Food Plants” written by Steve Nelle, “Checklist and Value of Deer Food Plants of North Central Texas,” and a poem about mesquites by Frank Grimes. All of this is capped off with an illustrated glossary (mostly about leaf characteristics and grass morphology), standard textual glossary, list of references, common name index, and scientific name index.

The book itself is printed on thick gloss paper (likely at least 80–100 lb text) where the color images and the large (likely 12 pt) font really stand out nicely. The book is spiral bound and thus lies flat when open, and the cover is heavy gloss/laminated card stock. Since I'm almost certain the first run will sell out in quick measure, the only suggestion I have for the author for his second printing is to switch from the spine-over-spiral cover to a basic spiral/comb cover. (Spine-over spiral gives spiral books a printable spine by using one continuous sheet that wraps around the wire spiral/comb to create both covers and a spine, with only the back portion actually attached to the spiral.) Although it makes the book look great on a shelf, it's a bit clumsy to handle, and I for one plan to be using my copy so much that it might NEVER sit on the shelf!—*Brooke Byerley Best, PhD, Editor & Botanist, Botanical Research Institute of Texas, Fort Worth, Texas, U.S.A.*